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EDITORIAL.

GREEN CHEESE AND THE GRADING SYSTEM.

The causes, probable consequences and preventive measures for the shipment of green cheese from Canada to Great Britain have been discussed by leading dairymen in "The Farmer's Advocate"; and while there seems to have been a general disposition to lay responsibility at the doors of what we call "the trade," the remedy is not so easy to find. Factorymen have been besought as a last resort, to withhold from the too eager buyer the products of the factory until they had passed the first stage of greenness. Then we have the empirical suggestion that the Government must step in and by legislation rectify this and other ailments of the business, so that patrons, factorymen and makers may be assured for the future of even greater net returns than in the past. With the magnitude of the trade, and the phenomenal prices of this and the past season, the subject is important, and any proposals made deserve our careful consideration, even if it only results in finding that certain proposed changes would be unwise or unworkable. The suggestion has been made that a compulsory system of official grading, such as practiced in New Zealand, would solve the whole problem, and also prove of great advantage in other ways.

There are two aspects of this grading question. First, we have to consider the comparative necessity for grading, and in the second place the practicability of carrying out such a system. The necessity for grading existed in New Zealand, at the beginning especially, because, we understand, practically all the cheese were sent to Great Britain on consignment, and without some official examination before leaving, the shippers were liable to be imposed upon by consignees in Great Britain. Further, their agents were ordinary merchants in New Zealand, not qualified to make inspections on their own account, the business at that time not being large enough to warrant the employment of special representatives in the cheese trade. Our conditions in this respect are totally different, as the cheese are practically all bought and paid for before leaving Canada, and the transaction, as far as the factory is concerned, is closed at the time the cheese are moved, and the question of quality is not hard to decide.

In the next place, is it practicable to carry out such a system in Canada? It must be borne in mind that here again the situation of the two countries is entirely different. According to our latest information, there are probably only about 100 factories in New Zealand, while Ontario alone has over 1,200 in operation; and, as shipments in New Zealand are made only once in two or three weeks, the number of lots for examination is comparatively small. The cheese are shipped direct from the factories to the steamers in small, open cars or trucks which never contain cheese from more than one factory. The cheese are packed in open crates (described in our correspondence on the subject from the British markets last year), so that the trier is inserted without opening the package. Hence, examination at the port, after the cheese arrive by rail and before they are loaded on the steamer, is simple, and does not interfere in any way with the handling of the cheese. Shipments are made at four or five different ports, so that the quantity at each port is very small, and one can easily do the work, and thus secure uniformity in the grading. The grade marks are placed on the packages just before the cheese are loaded into the ship, therefore there is no opportunity for interference, were anyone disposed to do so, with these marks,

before the cheese reach the other side. Although the cheese are graded in New Zealand, there is said to be little attention paid to the matter of quality in settling for the cheese. Practically all are sold at the same price. A contract is made for the season's output, and rarely is there any reduction on account of quality. It is true the grading is of some assistance to cheesemakers who are enterprising enough to take note of the criticisms made.

In Canada, with probably five or six thousand shipments of cheese during the same period that less than one hundred are made in New Zealand, and the great bulk of it going through the one port of Montreal, there is tremendous congestion at the time of heavy shipment. Experts consider that there is only one place in which proper examination could be made, and that is in the warehouses of the exporters. When the cheese are delivered at these warehouses, there is a great mixture of different lots, and it is only after they are sorted out that the work could be accomplished. As the bulk of the week's receipts all arrive in two or three days, and many of them are shipped out a few hours after arrival, it would require a very large staff of men, and even then it would be a practical impossibility to have them all graded without interfering seriously with the progress of business. The grade marks would have to be put on in the warehouses of the exporters. Most of the exporters are honest men, but how are we to make sure, without assuming complete control of the shipment, that these Government marks would not be interfered with before being placed in the ships for exportation? In our export trade, as now conducted, many of the cheese-buyers here are provided with special brands, registered in the Old Country, which the houses there require to be stamped upon the cheese which they have ordered, and for the quality of which they hold their Canadian agent responsible. Such cheese are wanted for a special market, and the brand indicates its character. Sometimes, cheese considered first-class in one market do not suit in others, and vice versa. The British market is whimsical and very decided. To score all cheese according to one set standard, would be to prejudice certain cheese that otherwise would be all right in certain markets. In fact, it would destroy all hope of having the official grading made a basis for payment to the factories. Again, considerable quantities of cheese go to certain English ports via New York, Portland and Boston, attracted by lower freights and insurance, with good cold-storage facilities, and the goods are shipped from different local stations in Ontario, where the grading inspectors would have to be at the time.

No doubt, if it were practicable to have all cheese graded according to quality, and paid for on that basis it would have a good effect on the improvement of quality; but, as we have just pointed out, there is good reason to believe the cheese would not be so paid for, even if they were graded.

Official grading would relieve the buyer, to some extent, of the onus of making rejections, but it would not insure the payment for cheese according to quality. Men acquainted with the true inwardness of the trade state that the number of lots of inferior cheese which pass without comment as "finest," is in excess of the actual number rejected on account of poor quality. It is easy to see, then, what difficulties would arise in working out the scheme, which in its operations would not long satisfy those few who ask for it. Some seem to think that a system of grading would necessarily result to the advantage of the factories by preventing claims made because of

the quality of their cheese. The fact of the matter is that it would probably increase enormously the number of claims made on the quality of the cheese, and, while that is not a valid objection to the system, it is a practical point very hard to get around.

The expense and difficulties which would attend any attempt to officially grade all the cheese in this country are, we fear, out of all proportion to the benefit that would be derived therefrom. The money can be spent to better advantage in some other way. We have built up our trade in our own way, and it surely has been a great success, which is more than can yet be said of New Zealand. Their natural conditions are far ahead of ours, because they have no high temperature to contend with, and practically the same climatic conditions throughout the whole cheesemaking season. There is no fodder cheese made, and no extreme cold weather. Yet, notwithstanding all these advantages, New Zealand cheese have been selling during the past six months at $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of a cent below the ruling price for Canadian. The difference between the price of Canadian and New Zealand seems to be growing wider during the last year or so, even with their excellent system of instruction.

It is stated by those who should be in a position to know that official grading would be no deterrent to the man who wanted to let his cheese go in a very green condition, because one of the excuses which an indifferent maker might offer for shipping green cheese under present conditions would exist if all the cheese were graded, viz., the earlier they are shipped, the less risk there is of claims being made for the development of bad flavors. It might appear, at first thought, that something could be done by instructing the official grader to consider immaturity a defect, and "cut" green cheese accordingly. But the question arises, What is green cheese, and how is the grader to distinguish cheese which have not remained in the factory a proper length of time? In the first place, who can say just how long the cheese should remain in the factory? In the second place, how could grading insure that they be kept there for that or any particular length of time? Some may say, require all cheese to be stamped with the day on which they were made, but this would not only be objected to in Great Britain, but would leave a loophole for the salesmen or purchaser to date the cheese so as to make them out older than they really were. Such looseness would never do. Well, then, it may be asked, could not the grader judge from their condition how old they were? The answer is, "Not satisfactorily, for he would be quite at sea in comparing cheese that had been, say, a week in a cool-curing room with those that had been a shorter length of time in a curing room of higher temperature. The latter might show more evidences of ripening than the former, although every cheesemaker knows that the cheese, put in a cool-curing room after making would ultimately ripen into the better quality of goods, other conditions, of course, being equal. The point is that if the grader considered immaturity as a defect, and undertook to discriminate against green cheese in scoring, he would be very liable to do a great deal of harm by really discouraging the erection of cool-curing rooms at the factories.

A careful canvass of the whole situation only serves to convince practical men that compulsory official grading need not be looked to as a solution of the green-cheese-shipping problem. Indeed, its tendency would rather be to place a premium on the shipping of green cheese, so as to get them past the grader before defects should develop. About all that can be done, it seems, is